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ABSTRACT

This guide is designed to facilitate the debating of local policy options in school restructuring which have implications for the education of students with disabilities and other learners with special needs. The guide summarizes special education issues and policy options described more fully in preceding booklets and then asks the reader to specify option preferences. The guide is designed to facilitate discussions regarding the future of special education and to assist in efforts to establish policies that will guide schools in providing quality education to all students. The guide is divided into three numbered response sections. The first of these calls for developing a statement of beliefs about the education of students with disabilities as well as all students. The second section presents five issues presented as action statements, each accompanied by one or more policy options. The issues include: (1) develop a clear vision and mission for education that includes all students; (2) establish a system of accountability; (3) create an organization that supports the mission of restructuring; (4) change what schools teach and how they teach it; and (5) create supports for staff development and staff renewal. Response section 3 concerns five more issues, as follows: (1) stakeholder responsibility; (2) integrated community services for students with disabilities and families: (3) educational technology; (4) teacher preparation and certification; and (5) funding. A form that readers may use to describe other issues they would like to have addressed, a respondent information sheet, and a checklist for indicating belief statement and policy option preferences conclude the document. (JDD)

ED358645

# Guide to Discussion & Response

## Issues & Policy Options in Special Education

This document is designed to encourage discussion about policy options for students with disabilities. With the movement toward educating all students in their "home schools" and the recent restructuring efforts, issues emerge and the need for new policy becomes evident. Using this response booklet as a guide for your discussions will assist in exploring options and developing policy for special education in restructured schools.

CASE Research Committee
1992

■ The Future of Specialized Educational Services ■
for Students with Disabilities

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■ Building A Future Agenda for the ■
Education of Students with Disabilities

# A Response Guide


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# Reaching the People with a Stake ■

This is a guide for CASE members to use with their colleagues and constituencies to debate the local policy options that are emerging in school re-structuring. All of these issues have implications for the education of students with disabilities and other learners with special needs. Your local debate hopefully will influence state, national and provincial discussions.

We encourage you to seek out stakeholders who are students, parents, board members, professional educators, labor, business and community representatives—who share an interest in education.

We invite individuals or groups to:

- respond to any or all of the issues and policy options
- raise further issues
- offer additional proposals

The Research Committee identified issues through:

- review of available literature
- analysis of the University of Maryland Center for Policy Options in Special Education paper
- discussions with representatives of U.S. and Canadian federation presidents of CASE
- discussions with other national education associations
- advice from schools and leading educators
- examination of local programs and special studies from states and provinces

# Before You Begin■

In this response booklet you will be given the opportunity to respond to all of the special education issues and policy options which have been presented in both the University of Maryland and the CASE Research issues and options papers. You will also be asked to reflect on your beliefs regarding the education of all students including those with disabilities. Please be sure you have read both papers before completing this document.

Each issue is summarized in this booklet as well as each policy option for that issue. You are then asked to specify your option preference after each issue is summarized. You may need to refer back to the Maryland and CASE Research papers for clarification of issues and policy options.

You may complete this booklet as individuals or groups. A summary sheet is provided at the end of this response booklet which asks you to mark your preferences for policy options under each issue. Though this page is primarily for your own benefit, we would appreciate receiving a copy of your results. This information will assist the CASE Executive Board in the on-going debate regarding the future of Special Education.

It is the hope of the CASE Research Committee that this document will facilitate discussions in your districts regarding the future of special education and will assist you in your efforts to establish policies that will guide your schools in providing quality education to all students including those with disabilities.

The CASE Research Committee

# ■ Response Section I ■

## Developing a Statement of Beliefs

Before discussions ensue regarding special education issues and policy options, the individuals entering into this discussion must be clear in their beliefs regarding the education of all students including those with disabilities. The CASE Research Committee strongly advocates for clarification of beliefs before addressing the issues and policy options outlined in these papers.

# Developing a Statement of Beliefs

Within a vision and a mission statement are imbedded a set of beliefs which are the foundation for both. Beliefs are deeply held convictions about the education of students with disabilities as well as all students. These beliefs affect the choices we make about the education of all students including those with disabilities. Until schools can sort out and agree upon their own beliefs, it will be impossible to build policies that will lead to a productive, successful educational system. Goals which clearly reflect these beliefs need to be established and communicated to all personnel within the schools as well as those individuals, parents, and agencies which have a direct relationship with the schools. These beliefs and goals will then become the basis for all other policy decisions regarding students with special needs.

**1. Do you accept the underlying belief system that all children can and will learn?**

- This belief embraces diversity of culture, language and learning.
- If educators agree that all children are able to learn, then this belief must include those with disabilities, regardless of the severity.

**2. Do you accept the rights of all students to an appropriate education with their peers?**

- We as educators need to ask ourselves if we are providing a "separate" education for special needs students out of necessity or out of convenience.
- This belief suggests a separate education for any child is not an equal education.

### 3. Do you believe all schools should accept the responsibility for educating all of their students?

- This belief implies a need for each staff member to take responsibility for educating each student.
- It also suggests that in spite of a student's disability, it is the educator's responsibility to find ways children can learn and then demonstrate how children can learn under a variety of conditions.

## Discussion of Options

### Developing a Statement of Beliefs

Firm beliefs and strong convictions are the foundation for all policy decisions. Until schools can sort out and agree upon their own beliefs, it will be impossible to build policies that will lead to a productive, successful educational system.

*Key Questions:*

- What are your own beliefs as an educator regarding students with disabilities?
- How are they the same or different from the beliefs for all students?
- Are your actions consistent with your beliefs?
- If there are discrepancies, why?

## Belief Statement - Option 1

### We support education for all students in an inclusive school culture

This statement suggests the belief that all students can and will learn in an environment that supports and accepts all students regardless of their differences. This statement accepts the belief that all students have a right to be educated with their peers and are able to be educated with their peers with supportive, specialized services as needed.

## Assumptions

This statement assumes that school systems are willing to rethink their current delivery systems for special education students. It assumes that schools are able to expend time and energy to create a system where students with disabilities can be included in the school environment in the same manner as non-disabled students. It also assumes that the necessary support will be available to allow a student to learn in an inclusive school culture.

## Strategies for Implementation

This would require changes in the ways many schools function today. Collaboration between teachers, administrators, parents, and community agencies would surface as the most appropriate method to plan and provide for a student's education. In-service and retraining would be on-going.

## Implications

This belief may require significant changes in teacher/staff/parent attitudes toward serving students with disabilities. State Departments will need to examine their regulations regarding funding and teacher certification and must be willing to cooperate with school systems that are adopting an inclusive school culture.

## Belief Statement - Option 2

We support education for students with disabilities along a continuum of programs and services

This statement supports the belief that students with disabilities are uniquely different and therefore need a continuum of programs to provide appropriate services. It does not dismiss the belief that students can learn, but it does leave the responsibility of a student's education with the "specialist" in the field.

## Assumptions

This statement assumes that students require a type of program or service which may need to be separate from the regular school environment. It also assumes that programs for exceptional students need to be managed and funded separately from the regular education programs.

## Strategies for Implementation

If this were the belief system, special education and regular education programs would maintain separate identities. Central Office would retain control over funding, budgets, personnel, etc.. Eligibility decisions continue to adhere to current federal and state regulations and only special education certified personnel continue to be responsible for a student's program.

## Implications

Very little change would occur in most school systems if this belief were adopted. A dual delivery system would remain in operation. Students would continue to be identified and labeled. This option does not encourage collaboration or teaming of educators and it does not promote a shared responsibility between regular and special educators.

## Belief Statement - Option 3

Other (please explain)

## Exercise 1 - *CASE Research*

# Developing a Statement of Beliefs

- Describe your current belief system.

- Which belief option do you prefer and why?

- If you were to adopt this belief what issues must you address?

## ■ Additional Comments ■

# ■ Response Section II ■

Maryland Paper
Issues and Policy
Options



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# Summary Issue 1 -*Maryland Paper*

## Develop a Clear Vision and Mission for Education that Includes <u>All</u> Students

The goal of special education has always been to provide an appropriate education in the least restrictive environment to all special needs students. How this goal is achieved often looks very different from district to district or even from school to school. In all restructuring efforts, schools develop a vision for the future and a mission statement which supports this vision. Special and regular educators need to agree on a clear vision for educating all children with diverse needs including those with identified disabilities. A mission statement which clarifies the district-wide belief system needs to be developed. Policies should be outlined which make the vision and the mission clear to all.

**"Special and Regular educators need to agree on a clear vision for educating all children with diverse needs."**

## *Policy Options:*

### 1. Unified system

*(See pp. 30-33 in the Maryland Paper)*

A unified educational system would maximize and coordinate all available human resources in order to provide for the diverse needs of all students including those who may have been identified as disabled. This option assumes that the "home school" is responsible for educating all students at that site and all students are entitled to specialized instruction and support as needed. In this system there would be no diagnosing, labeling or categorizing students. Collaborative classrooms would provide educational services for all students. This option assumes that the district's vision is one of full inclusion with no distinction between special and regular education.

## 2. Inclusive or heterogeneous schools

*(See pp. 34-37 in the Maryland Paper)*

This option also assumes a vision of inclusion of disabled students within the "home school". Students would receive all or most of their instruction in regular classrooms with specialized support provided to the classroom teacher as needed. This option does not require a major change in the conception of special education as a program. It can exist as part of an inclusive system or in one which maintains separate program administrations.

## 3. Separate program identity with a continuum of placements

*(See pp. 38-41 in the Maryland Paper)*

This option assumes that some students require a type of program or service that cannot be delivered within a student's "home school." Specialized educational services could be provided in separate classrooms and schools for all or part of the student's educational program. A continuum of services would be developed which could include placements in separate facilities if deemed necessary.

## 4. Other options (please explain)

**RESPONSE**

## Develop a Clear Vision and Mission for Education that Includes All Students

■ Describe your current practice and/or policy.

PRACTICE:

POLICY:

■ Which policy option do you prefer and why?

■ If you were to adopt this policy what issues must you address?

## Additional Comments

# Summary Issue 2 - *Maryland Paper*

## Establish a System of Accountability

The primary reason for restructuring is to improve education in specific measurable ways. The end result should be better outcomes for all students. A system of accountability needs to be established and on-going to ensure all students are progressing toward desired outcomes.

**"The cornerstone of restructuring the school is a set of student outcomes for which schools can be held accountable."**

## *Policy Options:*

### 1. Unified outcomes and accountability

*(See pp. 44-45 in the Maryland Paper)*

This option would establish a uniform set of performance outcomes and a mechanism for measuring and reporting performance for all students. This option assumes that there are a broad based set of outcomes which all students can acheive. It also recognizes that performance indicators and assessment strategies need to reflect the diversity of the goals of students with disabilities.

### 2. Differentiated outcomes and accountability

*(See pp. 46-47 in the Maryland Paper)*

This option assumes that different sets of outcomes are required for students with disabilities in order to reflect their individual and diverse educational needs. It assumes that the content of educational programs for these students vary significantly from programs for other students and, therefore, requires a different set of outcomes. Also, various measures may be used differently for program accountability purposes.

3. **Other options (please explain)**

4. **Other options (please explain)**

**RESPONSE**

## Establish a System of Accountability

- Describe your current practice and/or policy.

PRACTICE:

POLICY:

- Which policy option do you prefer and why?

- If you were to adopt this policy what issues must you address?

## Additional Comments

# Create an Organization that Supports the Misson of Restructuring

Once a belief system has been clearly outlined in the form of policy there may be a need to reorganize the governance structures. Who will be responsible for ensuring that students' needs are met with appropriate services? Who will have the authority to budget and allocate special education funds? Who will complete necessary state and federal reports? What procedures will be needed regarding special education referral, identification, and placement? These questions need to be addressed in policy.

**"Who will be responsible for ensuring that students' needs are met with appropriate services?"**

## *Policy Options:*

### 1. Centralized administration

*(See pp. 50-52 in the Maryland Paper)*

This option assumes that decisions regarding budget, personnel, curriculum development and other related services for special education programs need to be coordinated and consistently administered by central office personnel with support from intermediate educational agencies as needed. This option would provide consistency in procedures for identifying special needs students, IEP development, and implementation of the programs or services.

## 2. School-based management of all programs

*(See pp. 53-57 in the Maryland Paper)*

This option would allow for individual schools to maintain control over all building programs including collaborative teams and sub units with technical assistance and contracted services provided through central office, cooperatives or intermediate educational agencies. This option assumes that individual schools are accountability sites for all students and educational decisions are best made by individual school staffs and the community served. In this option all funds would be applied for and distributed by local school districts. State departments would work with school districts to determine the total level of funding by districts.

## 3. Other options (please explain)

**RESPONSE**

## Create an Organization that Supports the Misson of Restructuring

- Describe your current practice and/or policy.

PRACTICE:

POLICY:

- Which policy option do you prefer and why?

- If you were to adopt this policy what issues must you address?

## Additional Comments

# Summary Issue 4 - *Maryland Paper*

## Change What Schools Teach and How They Teach It

The restructuring efforts in this country today are focusing primarily on curriculum and instruction. What are schools supposed to teach and how? Should curriculum be broadly defined or should specific objectives be outlined for all students to acheive? What instructional techniques does the school wish to encourage, or will certain methods and techniques be mandatory?

**"Curriculum and instruction is the foundation of restructuring education"**

## *Policy Optons:*

### 1. Unified curriculum

*(See pp. 61-63 in the Maryland Paper)*

This option assumes that the knowledge and skills needed by students with disabilities have more commonalities than differences with those needed by their non-disabled peers. This common core of knowledge would be broadly defined and all students would be taught within the same outcomes based curricular framework. This option does not imply that all students will be taught the same thing, at the same time, in the same way. Individual goals, instructional strategies and materials would reflect the learning styles of individual students.

### 2. Separate or alternative curriculum

*(See pp. 64-65 in the Maryland Paper)*

This option requires the creation of a separate or alternative curriculum to meet the unique needs of students with learning problems. The alternative curriculum may be a parallel curriculum which is guided by the same learning outcomes as the "regular" curriculum. However, scope, sequence, and pacing may be different. A second alternative would be a separate curriculum where outcomes and content are completely different from the "regular" curriculum.

3. **Other options (please explain)**

4. **Other options (please explain)**

**RESPONSE**

## Change What Schools Teach and How They Teach It

- Describe your current practice and/or policy.

PRACTICE:

POLICY:

- Which policy option do you prefer and why?

- If you were to adopt this policy what issues must you address?

## Additional Comments

# Create Supports for Staff Development and Staff Renewal

In any restructuring effort all school personnel need to be involved in a professional development plan that will assist in preparing them for the transition. Staff renewal or retraining is essential as each new program evolves. Regular educators and special educators need to learn more about each other. All support staff need to be aware of changes, particularly when faced with assisting children with multiple needs for the first time. A school system needs to develop an on-going plan which is implemented in each school. Technical assistance and sufficient resources need to be available to carry out the plan.

**"Staff renewal or retraining is essential as each new program evolves."**

## *Policy Options:*

### 1. Staff development in a restructured workplace

*(See pp. 69-71 in the Maryland Paper)*

This option assumes that the best way to affect behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs is through an approach which allows teachers to practice new techniques and receive immediate feedback. Collegial problem solving, coaching, and mentoring would be an integral part of this option.

2. Other options (please explain)

3. Other options (please explain)

**RESPONSE**

## Create Supports for Staff Development and Staff Renewal

- Describe your current practice and/or policy.

PRACTICE:

POLICY:

- Which policy option do you prefer and why?

- If you were to adopt this policy what issues must you address?

## Additional Comments

# ■ Response Section III ■

CASE Research Committee Issues and Policy Options



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# Summary Issue 1 - *CASE Research*

## Stakeholder Responsibility

All community members have a stake in the education of its younger members. Community support and involvement in education is essential for the continuation of the culture as well as for improvement in the community's quality of life.

**"All people have a niche in the life of a community."**

## *Policy Options:*

### 1. All stakeholders are responsible for the education of all students

This policy would encourage all stakeholders to be actively involved in the education of all students. All community members would become stakeholders and potential team members in educational planning and implementation.

2. **Other options (please explain)**

3. **Other options (please explain)**

**RESPONSE**

## Stakeholder Responsibility

- Describe your current practice and/or policy.

PRACTICE:

POLICY:

- Which policy option do you prefer and why?

- If you were to adopt this policy what issues must you address?

## Additional Comments

# Integrated Community Services for Students with Disabilities and Families

Education of students with special needs can be better achieved when all parties involved with the student work together. Schools and community agencies (including community mental health, public health, career development, job training, supportive employment, social service and justice system) who have learned to work together have found that common goals and open communication lead to successful delivery of all services. Policies need to be developed which will direct the integration of community services for students with disabilities.

**"Models of integrated site delivery are emerging as an alternative. . . "**

## *Policy Options:*

### 1. Integrated community services

This option assumes all community agencies can bring family intervention problems that are affecting school performance and community adjustment of individual students to a community agency forum. Key personnel from each agency would allocate resources and make decisions regarding their involvement with an integrated community service plan. Coordination of all services would be on-going.

## 2. Site-based coordination of all services to special needs students

This option assumes that the best method of coordinating and providing services is at one site. A site-based team would review referrals and recommend action to community agencies. All procedures, including referral and assessment, would be coordinated at one common site. School personnel would assist in this effort, by providing information and working with agencies in locating a common site.

## 3. Other options (please explain)

## 4. Other options (please explain)

**RESPONSE**

# Integrated Community Services for Students with Disabilities and Families

- Describe your current policy/ practice.

- Which policy/practice do you prefer and why?

- If you were to adopt this policy/practice what issues must you address?

## Additional Comments

# Summary Issue 3 - *CASE Research*

## Educational Technology

Educational Technology could provide a variety of new opportunities for educators and for students with disabilities. Policies need to be developed which will ensure that appropriate technology is available to all who can benefit and that proper training is provided.

**"Current technological advances greatly enhance teaching and learning."**

## *Policy Options:*

### 1. All students and staff have access to and training in appropriate technology

This option would encourage the use of technology to support instruction, provide assistive devices, to help manage student programs or to provide easy access to information. All teachers and students would have access to this technology. Schools would provide on-going training in technological use and advances. Technology would be used to promote collaboration and cooperation among teachers as well as provide the means for all students to be included in schools.

2. **Other options (please explain)**

3. **Other options (please explain)**

**RESPONSE**

## Educational Technology

- Describe your current practice and/or policy.

PRACTICE:

POLICY:

- Which policy option do you prefer and why?

- If you were to adopt this policy what issues must you address?

## Additional Comments

# Summary Issue 4 - *CASE Research*

## Teacher Preparation / Certification

State Departments of Education and institutions of higher education cannot remain observers in the restructuring process. Both need to take an active role in assisting the vast changes which are taking place in the nation's schools today.

**"Higher education and certification departments need to look at the restructuring efforts..."**

### *Policy Options:*

#### 1. Teachers as "Generalists"

This policy would encourage teachers to function as teachers who manage the education of all students who have been assigned to them. The regular classroom teachers would be responsible for their students and would be taught a variety of instructional and behavioral strategies that will assist them in educating students with diverse needs.

#### 2. Specialized Education Personnel Certification

This policy would create a consulting specialist certificate which could be obtained after receiving a "Generalist" certificate.

### 3. Instructional Assistant Certification

This option would require certification for all paraprofessionals working with students.

### 4. Other options (please explain)

### 5. Other options (please explain)

RESPONSE

## Teachers Preparation / Certification

- Describe your current state policy.

- Which policy option do you prefer and why?

- If you were to adopt this policy what issues must you address?

## Additional Comments

# Summary Issue 5 - *CASE Research*

## Funding

Restructuring cannot occur without appropriate funds. Funding mechanisms at the State Department as well as at the local school level need to be reviewed. Policies need to be developed which will direct the changes in funding procedures and management of these funds.

**"Funding is a key issue in all restructuring efforts."**

## *Policy Options:*

### 1. Funding that supports inclusion

In this option funding would be based on a percentage of the total school population. Allowances could be negotiated for special district circumstances. This policy assumes that all communities have essentially the same percentage of students with disabilities.

2. **Other options (please explain)**

3. **Other options (please explain)**

**RESPONSE**

## Funding

- Describe your current practice and/or policy.

PRACTICE:

POLICY:

- What policy option do you prefer and why?

- If you were to adopt this policy what issues must you address?

## ■ Additional Comments ■

# Issues You Would Like to See Addressed ■

If you have identified additional issues please take the time to list and explain them here. If you need additional space please use another sheet of paper—title and insert here. You may attach this form to the summary sheet and mail them to the address listed on the back cover.

1. _____

2. _____

3.

4.

# Respondent Information Sheet ■

If you would like to assist the CASE Research Committee in continuing to collect data on special education policy, please complete the front and back of this form and mail it to the address on the back cover of this book.

■ 1. Name of respondent(s)/group

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

2. ■ Name and address of group leader/contact person.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Phone: _____

3. ■ School organization type (check one):

A. Local District/Secondary only _____
B. Unified K-12 _____
C. Unified K-14 _____
D. IEA _____
E. Cooperative _____

4. ■ Number of Students receiving special education services (check one):

A. under 500 _____
B. under 1000 _____
C. under 1500 _____
D. under 3000 _____
E. under 5000 _____
F. under 10000 _____
G. 10000 + _____

5. ■ Number of students in your district/IEA/ cooperative: _____

6. ■ Are major restructuring efforts underway in your state or district?

Y_____ N_____

If yes, please describe:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

7. ■ Have you developed any new policies to support these efforts?

Y_____ N_____

If yes, please forward a copy to the CASE Research office:

CASE Research Committee
Indiana University
Smith Research Center - Room 100
2805 East 10th Street
Bloomington, IN 47405

8. ■ Would you like a copy of CASE's final recommendations for your use?

Y_____ N_____

**Please fill out the other side**

# Summary Sheet

After you have completed this response booklet you may use this page to indicate your findings by checking your belief statement and policy option preference for each issue. Please attach an explanation sheet for other options and send those sheets and this form to the address on the back cover of this book.

## Belief Exercise

Which belief statement did you prefer?

_____ **Option 1**- We support education for all students in an inclusive school culture

_____ **Option 2** - We support education for students with disabilities along a continuum of programs and services

_____ **Option 3** - Other (attach explanation sheet)

## University of Maryland Paper

**Issue 1 - Developing a Clear Mission and Vision for Education that includes All Students**

_____ **Option 1** - Create a unified system

_____ **Option 2** - Inclusive or heterogeneous schools

_____ **Option 3** - Separate program identity with a continuum of placements

_____ **Option 4** - Other (attach explanation sheet)

**Issue 2 - Establish a System of Accountability**

_____ **Option 1** - Unified outcomes and accountability

_____ **Option 2** - Differentiated outcomes and accountability

_____ **Option 3** - Other (attach explanation sheet)

**Issue 3 - Create an Organization that Supports the Mission of Restructuring**

_____ **Option 1** - Centralized administration

_____ **Option 2** - School-based management of all programs

_____ **Option 3** - Other (attach explanation sheet)

**Issue 4 - Change What Schools Teach and How They Teach It**

_____ **Option 1** - Unified curriculum

_____ **Option 2** - Separate or alternative curriculum

_____ **Option 3** - Other (attach explanation sheet)

**Issue 5 - Create Supports for Staff Development and Staff Renewal**

_____ **Option 1** - Staff development in a restructured workplace

_____ **Option 2** - Other (attach explanation sheet)

## CASE Research Committee Issues

**Issue 1 - Stakeholder Responsibility**

_____ **Option 1** - All stakeholders are responsible for the education of all students

_____ **Option 2** - Other (attach explanation sheet)

**Issue 2 - Integrated Community Services for Students with Disabilities and Families**

_____ **Option 1** - Integrated community services

_____ **Option 2** - Site-based coordination of all services to special needs students

_____ **Option 3** - Other (attach explanation sheet)

**Issue 3 -Educational Technology**

_____ **Option 1** - All students and staff have access to and training in appropriate technology

_____ **Option 2** - Other (attach explanation sheet)

**Issue 4 -Teacher Preparation/Certification**

_____ **Option 1** - Teachers as "Generalists"

_____ **Option 2** - Specialized Education Personnel Certification

_____ **Option 3** - Instructional Assistant Certification

_____ **Option 4** - Other (attach explanation sheet)

**Issue 5 -Funding**

_____ **Option 1** - Funding that supports inclusion

_____ **Option 2** - Other (attach explanation sheet)

Thank you for your time and input.